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SIPDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR
KABUL PLEASE PASS CFC-A

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE: NEXT STEPS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RYAN C. CROCKER. REASONS: 1.4(B)(D).

11. (C) Eleven days into Pakistan's earthquake disaster, substantial U.S. assistance continue to encourage the Pakistani public and give confidence to the government that it has strong international backing as it confronts the worst catastrophe in its history. Over the next several days, a U.S. military engineering company and field hospital will deploy into the affected area, strengthening the sense of an ongoing, reliable relief effort. The Pakistani government, led by the military, has responded well to this crisis, demonstrating an impressive organizational ability, both in Islamabad and in the quake area.

12. (C) That is the good news. The reality is that the magnitude of the damage and the inhospitable terrain in which the quake occurred will mean that Pakistan and the international community must stay focused on the relief effort for the weeks and even months ahead. The human losses are almost unbelievable with the government now estimating more than 60,000 dead and many more than that injured. The remote, isolated locations of many of the villages compound the difficulty of delivering effective relief, and we are only a few weeks away from the onset of winter in a mountainous area where several hundred thousand are without shelter. Some in the international community--and in Pakistan--are already talking about a shift from relief to reconstruction. If we start backing away from relief operations, a lot more people are going to die.

13. (C) As I judge it from here, the overall international response has been less than impressive. The United Nations was slow to engage on this crisis, and its response remains lackluster. As of today, for example, only four U.N. helicopters are operating in country. The UNSYG is basically missing in action. He has not visited Pakistan, nor has he done much to signal that earthquake relief is a top U.N. priority. From our contacts here, I sense that other donors are looking at what the U.N. is doing and deciding on that basis that there is no need to be overly generous.

14. (C) Against this backdrop, I am concerned that the Geneva Donors Conference on October 26 will not be a success. The Europeans in particular are lagging, and the press here is speculating that grants from the European Union collectively or its members bilaterally may reflect simply a reprogramming of existing aid commitments.

15. (C) To sustain the momentum that we and the Pakistani government are developing, and to prevent this devastated region from sliding into a fresh disaster, I recommend three steps:

-- a call to Kofi Annan to spark a more energetic U.N. effort. In particular, Annan should visit Pakistan immediately and/or personally chair the Geneva Conference.

-- a call to Jack Straw, both as our leading European ally and because of the UK's EU presidency to assess the extent of European commitments and to urge more robust pledges.

-- a decision now by Washington to commit \$150 million in new funds to the relief and reconstruction effort.

16. (C) It is hard to overstate the magnitude of this disaster and its potential impact. We have gotten off to a very good start, but it is only a start. What we do and what we are able to get others to do in the coming days will be critical to determining what happens to hundreds of thousands of people, the way in which the government of Pakistan and its supporters are perceived by the people of this country and for the image of the U.S. and the West in the Muslim world.
CROCKER